(a) whether Asian Qualification Tournament for the World Junior Men's Volleyball Championship was held in Islamabad in May, 2001;

(b) if so, the names of the countries which participated in this tournament;

(c) whether the proposal for India's participation in this tournament was cleared by Government; if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the reasons for denying permission to the Indian Cricket team to play with Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS (SHRI P. RADHAKIRISHNAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The names of the countries, which participated in this tournament are Korea, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Iran, Pakistan, India, Chinese Taipei, Australia and Kazakhstan.

(c) Since it was a pre-qualification tournament for participation of Indian team in World Junior, Men's Volleyball Championship, Government had cleared participation in this tournament.

(d) After taking all the relevant factors into consideration, the Government has decided that circumstances prevailing at present are not yet fully conducive for Indian cricket team to play bilateral matches against Pakistan. There is, however, generally no objection to playing against Pakistan in multilateral matches at regular venues.

Youth development centres in Himachal Pradesh

2886. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have launched a scheme for setting up youth development centres in Himachal Pradesh;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the number of such centres set up so far in the State; and

(c) the details of expenditure incurred for running them and the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS (SHRI P. RADHAKIRISHNAN): (a) Yes Sir, the Government had launched in 1994-95 a scheme for setting up of "Youth Development Centres" throughout the country, including in Himachal Pradesh.

(b) A total of 37 Youth Development Centres have been set up in the State so far.

(c) Government of India sanctions a one-time grant of Rs. 30,000/ per Youth Development Centre. Thereafter, these Centres are expected to raise their own resources and be self-sustaining.

Deterioration in sports standards

†2887. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the standard of sports in the country has been very disappointing;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to take any specific and effective steps to encourage meritorious students at District-level; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS (SUSHREE UMA BHARTI): (a) No, Sir. However the level of sports in the country needs to be improved upto the level of International standards.

(b) and (c) Under the scheme of Promotion of Sports and Games in Schools, Government of Indian gives grant to State/UT Governments for organisation of District and State level inter-school sports competitions. The winners are given Rolling Trophy along with cash awards as incentives.